

WHO'S WHO?

By HUGO ST. FINISTERRE, M. D.

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CHAPTER I.

Professor Haged Gorgensen, spectacled, round shouldered, very bald and past threescore and ten, wheeled his squeaking chair round so as to face my mother, who in her third year believed in the startling theories of the degenerate crank, and who, with a feeling akin to awe, had brought her little boy—myself—for him to pronounce upon.

"Yes, madam," he said, his thin lips moving with a peculiar energy, which showed the single snag in his upper jaw, "any man with common sense who will devote three minutes' thought to the matter will not dare dispute it."

"I always believed what you said, professor, but my husband—"

"But! Your husband is a fool, like all husbands."

I looked sideways at mother, wondering how she would take this reference to my father. She said nothing in the way of protest. Perhaps she did not catch the full meaning of the words. Possibly she caught and believed them.

"It is as simple as that, two and two make four. In round numbers there are 1,500,000,000 of people in the world. They have all been modeled after the same image. The average length of life is 33 years, so this 1,500,000,000 is renewed three times a century. Since the creation, 6,000 years ago, it has been renewed 18,000 times."

"But," ventured my mother in a quaking voice, "there have not always been 1,500,000,000 of people on the earth. You know that at first there were only two—Adam and Eve—and a good many years must have passed before the number became as great as it is now."

The professor's jaw dropped, and his little gray eyes twinkled behind his spectacles. He was overcome for the moment with admiration for this timid woman that had dared to throw an obstacle in front of his juggernaut of logic.

"Madam, you're not a fool, which is more than I ever said of any other woman, but if you had held your tongue a minute longer you would have heard the qualification of my first statement. Of course many generations came and went before the population of the earth reached 1,500,000,000. I've figured it all out. Making allowance for all this, the total population of the world since the creation has been about 10,000,000,000,000. Do you realize it?" he demanded, leaning forward, with his hands on his shiny knees and glaring through his spectacles.

"Oh, yes, of course."

"Well, then, all I have to say, madam, is that you're an infernal sniggerer than every person ever born into this world. All the people that I have known find it rather hard work to grasp the full meaning of 100. When they strike 1,000, they begin to get hazy. Beyond that it is all a mass of terms, with nothing tangible in the way of understanding. Astronomers talk about the distance of heavenly bodies, the velocity of light, the speed of comets and all that without any more real comprehension of what it all means than that little freckle faced boy by your side knows about Pond's ascorum."

"I didn't mean—that is, of course, I don't understand—but—"

"Never mind," broke in the professor, with an impatient wave of his attenuated fingers. "The self evident truth is this: Every man and woman born into this world has, with few exceptions, two eyes, a nose, mouth and features and form of the face modeled after one image. Now, while we see a marvellous variety among the faces which we meet on the street, never encountering two that are exactly alike, it is all different that there must be a limit to this variation. It is not infinite. Do you follow me?" suddenly thundered Professor Gorgensen in such excitement that my poor mother gave a slight start and exclamation, while I looked round for some way of escape.

"Oh, yes; oh, yes; certainly I understand you."

"But! I doubt it. But you know as much as any of your sex. I have figured the whole thing out. I have made a mathematical demonstration of it."

The professor glared at my mother as if challenging her to dispute his assertion, but the frightened woman remained silent and expectant.

"Now and then," he continued, "we meet two persons so alike in appearance that their most intimate friends cannot tell them apart. Nevertheless there is a difference which manifests itself, after a time, if not in their looks, in their disposition, but what I am striving to impress upon your understanding is that this variation has its limit. When a certain number of human beings are modeled after the one image, a point is finally reached when all possible variations are at end. The work must then go back to the beginning and repeat itself."

"My! And you have figured it all out, professor?"

"I have," was the impressive answer. "I am the only person that has done so. The varying point is at the number 125,643,226. In other words, that number of men and women can be born and may grow up with enough variation in their looks and disposition to be distinguishable from each other, but when one more individual is added to the number he must be a reproduction of one of the vast multitude I have named."

My mother showed a surprising aptness in following the amazing theory of Professor Gorgensen.

"Then there are a good many people living today who are exactly the same in every respect?"

"Precisely."

"But what about the different races? If the two reproductions of each other belong to different races?"

"They would not be exact reproductions. You missed the finer point of my beautiful and exact theory. My calculation includes color, race, and all previous conditions of existence. Now, applying the truth I have discovered, it follows that at all times every man and woman in the world has 10 or 11 perfect doubles somewhere else in the world. There are at this moment some

where among the Caucasian race fully ten women exactly like you in looks, age and disposition. Your own husband or that stupid looking uncle at your side could not distinguish them from one another."

"Oh, my!" gasped my mother, looking apprehensively around. "I hope none of them will move into my neighborhood."

"It isn't likely that you will ever meet in this world. Have no alarm. Following my reasoning, all these doubles are but repetitions of doubles that existed a generation ago, and so on through the past centuries."

"Then thousands of years since there were persons living who were exactly like me and some who were exactly like you?"

The professor nodded his bald head. He was pleased that one woman could appreciate the wonderful symmetry of his logic.

"If we could only know about those persons," she added musingly.

"To some extent we can. Of course the majority died and passed away without leaving any record behind them, but we have the history of some of them."

A strange smile lit up the wan face of my mother.

"As for me?"

"There is no record. All such women were too insignificant to say or do anything that entitled them to remembrance."

"And with you?"

"It is different. It did not take me long to find out the historical personage who is reincarnated in me."

"Dare I ask, professor?"

"You read your Bible, I presume?"

"Daily."

"When you go home, turn to the twelfth chapter of 1 Samuel and in it, twenty-fourth verse you will find the account of the birth of the man who is reincarnated in this nineteenth century in myself. Of course our environments are different, and our lives necessarily vary, but my features, my frame, my brain, my disposition—included everything in our nature and looks is the same to the shadow of a hair."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" exclaimed my awed parent. "I will be sure to look it up as soon as I reach home. But, professor, I brought my son with me."

"What for?"

"I wish you to tell me what person of the past he resembles."

These spectacles, like twin locomotive headlights, were now focused upon me with a strange, hypnotic power. I could see the small gray eye twinkling like points of fire, while he seemed to look me through.

"Come here, sir," he growled without stirring his chair or feature.

I slid on to the high chair and, summoning my courage, slid up to him.

"What's your name?"

"Harmon O. Westcott, sir."

"How old are you?"

I hesitated a moment, during which my mother's anxious face that I was in my eleventh year.

"I want the exact date of his birth."

She gave it. He reached out his right hand, and the thin, cold, clawlike fingers rested on my crown. Staring straight into my eyes, he turned my head back and forth, first to the right and then to the left, while my body remained motionless. While doing so he muttered something which must have been in a foreign language, for I could not catch the meaning of a word. I was too young to suspect it at the time, but those thin, penetrating eyes noted everything.

My soft, dark, curly hair, my strong, regular teeth, my clear complexion, slightly freckled, the shape of my face, the features, all were observed with the keenest possible scrutiny.

Then he pinched my arms and legs, doing so with a persistence that caused me more than one twinge of pain.

"Now you may take your seat."

The big chair creaked round on its pivot, and the professor faced his vast desk, covered with huge volumes, whose backs were worn eaten and whose pages were yellow with time. He took down the middle volume and opened and fumbled it for a few minutes. I saw his giant forefinger running along the lines and down the page, while the scrawny neck and bent shoulders stooped forward as he peered at the written words before him.

Suddenly the claw stopped. He had found the right place. I could see his lips moving, as some persons do when reading to themselves. My mother and I silently watched him, afraid to speak.

I stealthily sought her hand and slipped mine within it. The warm, hard fingers closed affectionately over the chubby ones of her only son, as if she would shield him from some vague, shadowy peril.

Finally the professor slid each hand, palm upward, underneath the covers of the open volume, and with a quick flick closed it, wheeling on the instant so as to face us.

"I found it," he said, shutting these thin lips together as if to imprison the all important knowledge.

"And who is he?"

"Before answering your question," he said impressively, punctuating each sentence with a dip of his forefinger.

"Let me warn you, young man, to keep this knowledge a secret so far as you possibly can. You are going to have, if you have it not already, a most remarkable gift, but you must not exercise it except in case of necessity. If you do, it will probably pass from you. Mrs. Westcott, when you go home, you will read the thirteenth chapter of Judges, and in the twenty-fourth verse you will find a statement of the birth of a man of whom your son is to be the exact reproduction. All that is known of that famous character is told in the following

three chapters. That's all. Good day."

Notwithstanding my mother's anxiety to learn my horoscope, as it may be considered, she first sought out the reference which bore upon Professor Gorgensen himself. I think she suspected it, for she was smiling when she glanced down the page of the well thumbed Bible to the verse the professor had named and which told of the birth of Solomon, the son of David.

Then she hunted out my own in the second book of Samuel.

In me was born once more Samson, the strongest man that ever lived.

CHAPTER II.

MY DOUBLE.

Perhaps Professor Gorgensen was right in declaring himself a second Solomon, whose life would have repeated precisely that of the Biblical one but for his nineteenth century environments.

One amazing fact, however, was unquestionable. He was correct as to myself. My strength was as prodigious, as marvellous, as irresistible as that of the man who, many centuries ago, slew 1,000 with the jawbone of an ass and pulled down the gates of Gaza after suffering woeful indignities at the hands of the Philistines and dying amid the ruins, the blind victim of the faithless Delilah.

My mother was the only one who suspected the truth, for I was handicapped by the warning of the professor, that I must not call the gift into use except in the event of necessity.

So when I wrestled with my playmates I sometimes suffered them to throw me, when by putting forth a little of my tremendous power I could have hurled them lifeless to the earth. In the contests of leaping I seemed to strive to the utmost, but never exceeded the champions by more than a few inches. I maintained my supremacy, but by a hair breadth.

A burly brute came to Fayville to take charge of the village school. He was more than six feet in height, with the frame and strength of a giant. With little book knowledge, he gave his main attention to administering the birch. He conquered the obstreperous bullies, and then showed regret that no more insubordination cropped up that he might have the pleasure of subduing it.

Harmon Westcott will remain after school," he thundered, as I gathered up my books and started to follow the rest of the boys from the room. I laid the books on the desk behind me and sat down, wondering what the trouble was, for he had never as yet struck me with his merciless rod.

When we were alone, he spoke, frowning meanwhile the girl, as if unable to restrain his eagerness to bring it down about my shoulders.

"So you have been fighting, young man?"

"No, sir. I have not been fighting."

"Silence, sir! Nothing to do! Didn't you strike Jack Gibbs?"

"Jack Gibbs raised his hand to strike little Tim Metcalf, who accidentally fell over Jack's feet. Tim is a cripple and could not help himself. I caught Jack's arm and told him that if he struck Tim I would lick him. He didn't strike him, so there was no fighting."

"But you would have hit Jack Gibbs if he had hit Tim Metcalf."

"Certainly! I would hit any coward who did that."

"Then you've got the disposition to fight; just as bad as if you did fight. Off with your coat!"

I hesitated. I could do as well with my coat on as off, and I would not please this ruffian by obeying him.

"Why don't you do as told?" he demanded, David with rage.

"I shan't take off my coat, and if you lay your hand on me you'll regret it as long as you live."

He roared like a bull, and, raising the big stick over his head, aimed a terrific blow at me. Before it could descend I had him by the throat, bent him backward over the bench behind and twisted him to the floor as easily as if he had been a cow lamb. Not only that, I tightened my grip until he gasped for breath. I was using only one hand and did not exert a tenth part of the strength at my command.

The miserable wretch must have been at last smitten with paralysis. With my other hand I raised the rod from his grasp and then wished it through the air with a force that fairly raised a ridge through his garments with every stroke. When he had received a dozen or so, I lifted him clear of the floor and flung him across the room. He would have gone farther had he not crashed into the row of desks.

"Shall I take off my coat?" I asked mockingly.

He stared in a dazed way and muttered an oath. He could not understand it.

"Good day," and I walked out of the room and went home.

"I hope he won't tell of it," I reflected, "for it will be hard for me to explain it to the rest of the boys."

No fear of the teacher making public his own discomfiture, and so it remained a secret. I was too generous to take advantage of my triumph, and so long as he remained in charge of the school, he treated me with a consideration that made me sometimes regret the violence I had been compelled to use toward him.

Professor Gorgensen's transcendent wisdom did not enable him to prolong his life to that of the patriarchs of the olden times, for he died suddenly, about the date of the incident just told. I had no brothers and sisters, and so well had my mother and I kept the secret of my incredible strength that even my father did not suspect it, though aware that I was unusually powerful for a lad of my years.

Strange to say, though my mother knew the marvellous truth, she very seldom or never referred to it. There was something so uncanny in the whole thing that it filled her with awe, as it did myself. Father passed away, still ignorant on the point, and at the age of 19, when I was home on vacation from college, I drove to the old country church with only my mother as a companion.

It was a curious coincidence that the preacher's sermon that day was founded on the story of Samson. He went over the whole wonderful narrative, giving it a spiritual significance by proving that every Christian can be a Samson against the world so long as he rises superior to temptation. Once I glanced at my mother, who occupied the pew with me. She smiled faintly, and I blushed. Both of us were thinking of the same thing, but neither referred to it on our way home.

At the top of the high hill, near our house, the horse, as black as night and with the strength of a Hercules, gave way to his innate devilry, took the bit in his mouth and started down the incline on a dead run. Mother pulled for a moment, and then said in her quiet manner:

"Harmon, I hope there's no need of your killing him."

I know what she meant. She was aware that I could do so if I chose.

"I won't unless it is necessary," I answered, beginning to pull on the reins.

My fear was that they would break. And break they did, though new and strong. Just as I was beginning to worry the savage brute both lines snapped as if they were rotten twine. Being wholly free, the enraged horse was off again as headlong as ever.

My mother was dreadfully alarmed, for both of us were in peril.

"I'll bring him to terms," I said, stepping out on the shafts and leaping astride the back of the plunging animal. Working forward, I placed one arm under his throat and began drawing backward, steadily and irresistibly.

I could have broken his neck as if it were a pipestem, but I did not wish to do that, though sorely tempted. The devil fought, swung his head viciously, but I never let up. With a scream of fury he reared on his hind legs and began pawing the air. My mother sat pale, but cool.

"You had better kill him, Harmon," she called, "for he will kill you."

"I'll show him first that I am his master."

Suddenly he lowered his head, like a bucking broncho, resting most of his weight on his fore legs. This gave me my chance. He had broken free from the carriage, and the dropping of his head allowed me to leap to the ground beside him. I retained my grip, and the next instant the fierce horse was flung violently on his side. I used none of the tricks of the cavalryman or circus performer to trip him, but did it by main strength alone.

He was not yet conquered. With a whining cry he struggled upward, the flame of hatred in his eye. He meant to bite and pay me to death, but at the moment he was ready to attack, he went again, with a shriek that must have rattled every bone in his body. With undaunted courage he instantly repeated the effort, but was flung as ignominiously as before.

This second time, his self confidence was weakened. No animal is quicker than a horse to recognize his master. He required a little urging to regain his feet. I helped him to do so. He was all a-tremble, and finally opened his mouth, and made a savage bite at me. His teeth had hardly snapped together, close to my face, when I struck him a single blow alongside his head which tumbled him like a log to the earth.

That was enough. He refused to rise, and I lifted him to his feet. He shivered from nose to fetlock and was as docile as a lamb. I patched up the harness as best I could, refastened him between the wrenched shafts, and he trotted meekly homeward.

"Harmon," said my mother in a tremulous whisper.

"Yes?" I replied, looking inquiringly around.

"Did you exert all your strength?"

"No, mother, only the smallest part of it."

"Isn't it wonderful, my son? How do you restrain yourself?"

"I have never forgotten Professor Gorgensen's warning. My aim is never to summon it except the necessity exists."

"And that?"

"Occurs very rarely. Father never knew of it, and you wouldn't have a word from the late professor."

"Does none of your college mates suspect it?"

"I think not. I followed the champion leaper to beat me, when I could have left him out of sight, and have been content to let the star football players and basketball men, and in fact, all the athletes, keep their honors without dispute from me."

"You are wise. Doubtless plenty of occasions will arise, and I have the feeling that at some time you will commit the fatal mistake and drive the gift from you."

"If I do, I shall be an ordinary man. I hope the misfortune will not come at the hands of any Delilah or that I shall have my eyes gouged out in the process."

That was the last and indeed the first time we ever held such a conversation. Six months later my beloved mother was laid away to rest, and I was alone in the world.

I had been graduated from college and the world was before me. Not until my sainted mother was gone did I fully measure of her self sacrifice for her

blindness in not suspecting this and truth, so as to check it. But it was done, and it was useless to repine over it. Graduated, well groomed, and with the appearance of a young gentleman with a surplusage of means, I had not \$100 that I could call my own. Nor did I know which way to turn or what to do to obtain more.

"And yet something must be done, and that very soon," I bitterly mused, as I sauntered down Fifth Avenue on that glorious May morning. "There must be plenty of openings in this great city. I can become a clerk, a student of law or," I grimly reflected, "I could attain the position of the boss porter of the metropolis. That would be a case where the exercise of my strength would be a necessity. As a last resort I will fall back on that."

My musings took a new turn. "I studied boxing in college and acquired a fair knowledge of it. Why not become a teacher of the art in some gymnasium? When I put on the gloves with one more skillful than myself, I can knock him out with one blow!"

My breath almost left me.

For scarcely 100 yards away, on the same side of the avenue, and sauntering toward me, I saw—

My double!

Professor Gorgensen was right. I was not the only reincarnation of Samson, at least so far as appearances went. Here was a second. Dressed more fashionably than I, he was yet my perfect counterpart.

He recognized the fact, and returned my wondering stare with as profound amazement as my own. Our eyes were never once removed from each other, and when we came opposite, we involuntarily paused and extended our hands.

"Who are you? What is your name?" I managed to ask.

"My name is Westcott. What is yours?" he demanded.

CHAPTER III.

A DEMONSTRATION.

The most horrible emotion conceivable is that which came to a London barrister, who, upon returning to his lodgings late one night, opened the door and saw himself lying in his own bed. A certain trick that he had of reclining on his side, with one limb drawn up and the right hand slightly grasping the corner, was there. It was himself. Conscious of something frightfully wrong, he turned about, went down stairs and walked a long way in the crisp night air. When he returned, his bed showed no sign of having been occupied.

Similar were my feelings when I clasped the hand of the man that had stopped in front of me and extended his palm.

"This is not another person," I thought; "it is myself." And my shivering was intensified when he announced his name as Westcott.

By a terrible effort I held my identity of feeling and in a husky voice said: "Your name is Westcott. What are your initials?"

"H. O."

"Harmon O. Westcott—I know it."

"You are mistaken. It is Harold O. Westcott."

What! The breath of life touched my face. Harold O. Westcott could not be Harmon O. Westcott. I was alive. It was not a morbid figment of the brain. No individual knows precisely how his own voice sounds. It is with a strange emotion that he listens to its reproduction in the phonograph, even though it is squeaky and full of whining.

Nevertheless I know of a verity that the voice of the man in front of me was my own.

His feelings must have been much the same, for the paling of his countenance and the working of his muscles told by what a tense effort he retained his self control and consciousness.

"You will come with me?" he remarked inquiringly.

"I am pleased to do so."

He wheeled squarely about and we kept pace, side by side. The walk was a brief one, but we encountered several gentlemen and a carriage containing a couple of young ladies whom we saluted. Whether any of these persons was struck by the perfect similitude I cannot say. Probably in the brief, imperfect glances they did not notice it.

Harold O. Westcott had bachelor apartments in a fashionable quarter. His rooms were on the third floor, and we ascended to them by the elevator. Necessarily we came in contact with several individuals with whom my companion was acquainted. He exchanged a word with them and made a pleasant remark to the elevator boy.

I did not speak or look up, but kept my derby well down over my forehead and twisted one side of my mouth, so as to change my countenance to some extent. My friend noted and understood. The expression of his face showed that he was pleased, for it might lead to prevent complications.

At last we were seated face to face in his handsome apartments and the key was turned in the lock. He extended a box of Portagas toward me, and each of us lit one.

"Shall I order some wine?"

"Thanks; I never touch it."

"Nor do I. Well, my double," he added, with a light laugh. "This beats all creation. I never saw anything like it; it is worth the minister's joke, that each of us looks more like the other than he does like himself. How old are you?"

"Twenty-three years, four months and seven days."

"That makes your birthday—let me see."

He snatched a golden pencil from his vest pocket and, turning to the table at his side, figured for a moment on a bit of paper.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he exclaimed in a frightened half whisper. "You were born on the same day as I. I don't not that if the truth could be known it would be found that the hour and minute of our birth were the same. Have you any living relatives?"

"I am an orphan without brother or sister. I have some distant kin, but so distant that we are strangers."

"My case precisely. Under these unprecedented circumstances we can be accidental, for are not you I and I you?" he asked with his pleasing smile.

"You have more money than you know what to do with?"

He recognized the fact. The unworthy son became known to me. She had spent her last penny, depriving herself of almost the necessities of life for the sake of giving me an education. My self reproach was at my own

(Continued on page three.)

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Business Cards.

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PORTSMOUTH.
The board of the Christian Church refused to accept the resignation of their pastor, the Rev. Henry W. McGowan. The Ladies' Aid Society of this church gave a strawberry tea on Wednesday evening at Mr. John A. Coggeshall's. There was a large attendance and a good time enjoyed.

The auction sale at the home of the late Robert L. Thompson took place on Tuesday, with a small attendance. Mr. Joseph G. Dennis was the auctioneer.

Rev. Mr. Wilson of Providence is expected to preach at the Friends' meeting on Sunday, May 23.

Mr. J. F. Manchester lost a valuable cow this week.

LITTLE COMPTON.

Mrs. Charles L. Alden of Troy, N. Y., is at her summer cottage.